

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraphs 10-17 (Brief Description of the Drawings) with the following amended paragraphs.

[0010] FIG. ~~4A~~1 is a sectional view of a portion of a removable covering in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0011] FIG. ~~4B~~2 is a plan view of a removable covering in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0012] FIG. ~~2~~3 is a plan view of linked removable coverings in accordance with the present invention;

[0013] FIG. ~~3~~4 is a plan view of a portion of a removable covering having slats in accordance with the present invention;

[0014] FIG. ~~4~~5 is a plan view of a portion of a removable covering having linking tabs in accordance with the present invention;

[0015] FIG. ~~5~~6 is a plan view of portions of removable coverings partially linked with linking tabs in accordance with the present invention;

[0016] FIG. ~~6~~7 is a plan view of portions of removable coverings partially linked with linking slats in accordance with the present invention; and

[0017] FIG. ~~7~~8 is a plan view of portions of removable coverings fully linked with linking slats in accordance with the present invention.

Please replace paragraphs 19-25 with the following amended paragraphs.

[0019] Referring to FIG. ~~4A~~1, an exemplary sheet 10 of sticks 12 tied together with pairs of binding strings 14 suitable for incorporation into an embodiment of the present invention is shown. Each binding string of each pair of binding strings 14 passes alternately above and below adjacent sticks, but opposite the remaining binding string of the pair, so that the sticks are bound as shown. Each pair of binding strings is tied at the ends, forming knots 16 at respective ends of the sheet 10 which serves to keep the sticks securely bound together. The sheet 10 is bound by two or more pairs of binding strings depending on the length of the sticks which also determines the width of the sheet. In an exemplary embodiment the sticks are 10 inches long and are bound together by at least four pairs of binding strings. It is possible to replace the pairs of binding strings 14 with single binding strings such that one of the knots 16 is replaced by a loop where the binding string returns toward its originating end.

[0020] Further, as shown in FIG. 4B~~2~~, each binding string of each pair of binding strings 14 passes alternately to the left then right side of the remaining binding string as illustrated. Thus, if the sticks 12 are removed, each pair of binding strings 14 then forms a twisted pair. This preferred twisted arrangement keeps each pair of binding strings 14 tightly paired so that no unsightly separation occurs during use of the sheet 10.

[0021] The number of sticks 12, and the tightness with which binding strings 14 bind the sticks, determines the length of each sheet 10. In a preferred embodiment, the sheets 10 are relatively short so they do not need to be trimmed to fit on a small shelf or in a narrow drawer. The sheets 10 can then be joined as necessary to form longer sheets for placement on wider shelves and drawers. Referring now to FIG. 23, an exemplary pair of sheets 10 has been joined by tying adjacent ends of the binding string pairs 14 together, forming linking knots 18. Additional sheets can be bound in similar fashion to the two sheets shown, making a combined sheet of arbitrary length. Binding the sheets together in this manner advantageously creates a sheet having enough structural stiffness laterally, parallel to the supporting shelf or drawer surface to prevent undesired movement or lifting of the sheet 10.

[0022] An improvement to the exemplary sheet of the previous FIGS. 4A-4B-1-2 is shown in FIG. 3-4 where thin strips 20, 22 have been added to each end of the sheet 10. The combined thickness of the strips 20, 22 is approximately equal to the thickness of each of the sticks 12 so that a smooth surface is presented for supporting objects placed on the sheet 10. One exemplary method of tying the strips 20, 22 to the ends of the sheet 10 is illustrated in the FIG. wherein the ends of each pair of binding strings 14 exit between the strips 20, 22 where the ends may be further used to attach additional sheets 10. The strips 20, 22 provide a visually attractive appearance while providing a more stable and durable sheet 10.

[0023] A more convenient means of connecting sheets 10 than the previous tying method shown in FIG. 2-3 is shown with reference now to FIG. 45. As shown, additional interconnecting strings 24 have been provided on each sheet 10. The additional interconnecting strings 24 have a slug 26 pre-attached to the interconnecting strings 24 at only one end of the sheet 10. The slug is preferably made of a material that matches the color and texture of the sticks 12, although any other suitable material known to the designer can be used. The remaining ends of the interconnecting strings 24 are configured with a connecting loop 28. When a user is connecting adjacent sheets, the user simply inserts each attached slug 26 at one end of a sheet 10 into the respective